

Spontaneity, again, even if it escapes this critical snobbery, may still suffer from overmuch analysis. One may come to acquire a sort of mental X-ray apparatus which reveals in everything one meets the underlying skeleton. Every guest at the feast becomes a death's head. I know by experience how the spectre of Aristotle may follow one into every theatre, bothering one with reflections that never trouble the rapt absorption of one's neighbours, True, the habit may be overcome; for good criticism, it must be. For the critic, like the poet, must work with 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'; giving sympathy and surrender, if possible, at the moment, and judgement only afterwards. But this suspension of disapproval is easier to talk of than to practise; and nibbling at criticism clearly results for many in less pleasure, not in more taste. X-rays are dangerous.

Further, there is, I believe, a real danger of distortion in that dragging of certain reactions from the unconscious up into consciousness, which a great deal of criticism deliberately sets out to accomplish. In a poem, for instance, certain nuances of association, or of rhythm, may be only dimly felt by the ordinary reader; and rightly so: focus the attention on them, and the total effect becomes quite different. Those who practise such analyses, sometimes claim that their enjoyment is thereby increased. But one may wonder whether

they do not
enjoy the fruit, really, because they like
climbing the
tree; partly for the exercise, partly for the
eminence.
Here, again, personal taste clearly comes
into play; cer-
tainly unsuspected beauties of form are
sometimes re-
vealed by such dissections. But this sort of
anatomy can
easily be overdone, and one is too often
reminded by
its results of Swift's hideous jest about the
woman whose
appearance was so strangely altered for
the worse by